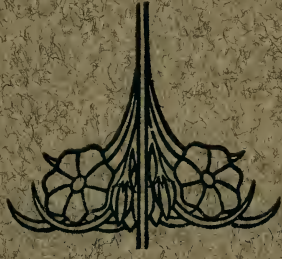


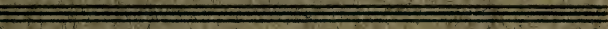
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# RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN

By  
MRS. JOEL SWARTZ



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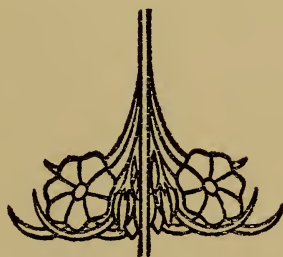


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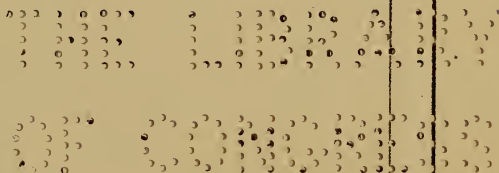


# RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN

By ✓  
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# INTRODUCTION

By CHARLES H. RICHARDS, D.D., Pastor of the Central Congregational Church of Philadelphia

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HAVE read with deep interest the excellent paper on "The Religious Training of Children," by Mrs. Joel Swartz. The Subject is of supreme importance because it is fundamental. Church and State, home and society, business prosperity and national welfare, must be built upon this foundation of right character. The future pivots upon this. It will be bright or dark according to the sort of men and women we develop in our homes and schools. We must have solid rock-foundation if we are to build securely; and the rock is the Eternal Truth of God which the Christian religion gives us. The large experience and ripe wisdom of the author of this booklet make her conclusions and suggestions of great value. Parents and teachers may find inspiration and helpful guidance here. Mothers' Clubs and Children's Aid Societies may well ponder the principles set forth clearly in these pages. This is a topic worthy of the thoughtful study of all who are interested in the betterment of mankind, and in the revived interest in it, manifested in so many quarters today, we see one of the brightest tokens of progress toward that ideal life to which our Lord has summoned us.

CHARLES H. RICHARDS.



# RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF CHILDREN

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By MRS. JOEL SWARTZ

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.—Prov. 22:6.

Some have doubted the reliability of the promise in this passage of Scripture because the children of Christian parents do not always become the followers of Christ. Yet candid thought will make all confess that the failure must be in the training and not in the divine promise. It must be that the parent has not comprehended the full meaning of the word train or the necessity of beginning the training with the child's earliest years, while its nature is still so plastic that it may be moulded into a true Christian character, or some outside influences have prevented it from being reared up in the way in which it should go.

Statistics show that a large proportion of young people have not been found in the Church and do not come to Christ in later life, and that crime has increased more rapidly than does the population.

These are sad facts which make it evident that the church and parents should be more zealous in efforts to bring children to Christ while yet very young. But often, alas, even religious parents are found proclaiming by speech or manner that they are making but little effort to bring their children while yet of tender years into a saving knowledge of Christ! And even when their children are so impressed by the Holy Spirit that they yearn for spiritual food, they are by cold neglect turned off, as it were, with only a stone for bread. Thus we find that a large proportion of children of Christian parents are being denied their birthright, turned over to grow up in the great army of those living out of the Church, and thus exposed, may fall an easy prey to snares set for them by the enemy of souls, in the form of infidelity, the saloon, the gambling den and the brothel; evils which, in some form, taint so many characters not resting on the Rock Christ Jesus.

With the open saloon protected by the government in its work of making vagrants and criminals, it seems impossible for the percentage of criminals to be decreased; yet we know that righteousness will eventually prevail. The Church is steadily



gaining. Rev. Dr. H. K. Carroll, in his religious statistics of the United States for 1901, shows that there was a gain in church membership, including the Catholic, of 730,027, a per cent. of 2.67, a gain greater than that of the population, the annual rate of which for the same year was 2.18 per cent.

That there is so much gain with all the evils surrounding the Church is a cause for encouragement, yet as a nation we are, to a great extent, a non-church going people. Josiah Strong, D.D., in his book, "The New Era," based on the census of 1890, gives carefully prepared statistics and estimates that should be read by every Christian. He says, page 204, "Careful investigations have been made in city and country which give us definite knowledge. From these investigations it appears that less than half of the people profess to attend church. In Vermont, a few years ago, forty-four towns, believed to be above the average of the State in church attendance, were carefully canvassed. All were counted attendants who professed to be, and all children and invalids in church-going families were reckoned attendants; and yet only 49 per cent. of the people were church-goers." He shows that careful investigation in New York State and others, some in the South, brought no better results.

Rev. William P. Swartz, Ph.D., in a pamphlet, "Young Men and the Churches," written in 1890, and after the most careful investigations, says: "It is a distressing fact, that just as conspicuously as the young men are absent from the churches, they are present in the penitentiaries. The United States census shows that from 1870 to 1880 the population increased 30.1 per cent. and the prisoners increased 78.1 per cent. The churches publish their gains every year or two but the devil does not herald his victories. In spite of the growth of Christianity crime is terribly prevalent. It is more than threatening a civilization which has the opportunity of the ages for honoring God and blessing men."

From the great army living without Christ, the ranks of the tramps and vagrants in the United States, estimated to be a hundred thousand, and the large army of convicted criminals, are steadily being filled up as one after another drops out, "dead in trespasses and in sin," into an awful eternity. These facts should quicken the Church, and especially parents, to a greater degree of earnest, wise effort for the children. We must recognize the fact that children are capable of growing up into Christian lives, and set ourselves earnestly to work to bring them into a knowledge of the saving power of

Jesus while their hearts and minds are yet open to receive Him.

The Church needs to emphasize the possibility of child piety as the only means of safety for the individual and for the nation. Throw about the children the advantages of the Sunday-school, the Junior Society of Christian Endeavor, and attendance upon regular services of the church and the pastor's class for religious instruction and provide these advantages not only for the religious training of the children of the Church, but also for those not of Christian families. For the neglected class of children provide industrial mission training, mission Sunday-schools and employ consecrated women to do work among them from house to house.

Let the pulpit emphasize the great responsibility of the parent whose duty to the child cannot be transferred to any other agency. Let the minister ever hold in mind a consciousness that no amount of faithful care for his flock and interest in others can excuse him for neglecting the more binding and sacred duty of training up his own children in the way they should go and thus the more surely save them and by his example help other parents. Especially do the children need the combined interest and effort of both parents to bring them safely

on the journey of life. It matters not how faithful and competent the mother may be, she cannot, while the father is exerting an influence over the children, as he must while he lives, relieve him of this responsibility. Yet the mother, being more with the young child, should exercise more constant, earnest care for its spiritual nature. Especially should the spirit of prayer and dedication hover over the child from its earliest existence until it has arrived at well-matured years and a well established Christian character.

A mother, having raised a large family of sons, all useful in the Church, was asked how she managed to get all of them to become Christians. She replied: "I have been particular to bring them to Christ before they were seven years old, for I always felt that if I failed in this, possibly they would then grow so much away from my influence that I might never succeed."

As parents let us have such faith in the regeneration of our children while yet very young that we will not fail to see that their faces are set in the right direction from infancy and so kept by care and the Holy Spirit that they will never need to be turned about, regenerated and not needing to be converted as they reach riper years.

Henry Ward Beecher said: "The religious instruction of the child cannot begin too early and it is properly parental work. As I look back at my childhood I can see that I never at any later period had a fuller, deeper and more conscious sense of sinfulness, or my need of God or my aptitude towards things spiritual, than when I was six years old. The home in which I was brought up was full of religious influences and yet I was led to struggle with difficulties and doubt." He also expressed regret that he was not led at that early age to Christ, and he adds: "I stuck fast on the rock of divine decrees. I thought if I were born to be saved I would be saved, and if I were not I could not be."

How sad it is that a child should be left to struggle with such a difficulty! The parent is placed over the child's spiritual self as well as its physical and mental being to shield and develop, by God's help, the entire child, and is commanded to train it up in the way it should go, and encouraged by the precious promise added: "And when he is old he will not depart from it."

The command is to "train up a child," not train it after it has grown up, but train it into a religious life, "the way it should go," while growing up. Not simply teach it but so train that it will have a deep

consciousness of sinfulness and weakness and of the loving power of Christ to help. When we consider the weakness and lack of wisdom of the parents, the ignorance and waywardness of the child and the various hindering influences brought to bear upon its character, we are led to exclaim, Who is sufficient for so great a responsibility!

A careful study of this subject has impressed me very deeply that the most common mistake which is made is that of not leading children while yet of tender years to recognize Christ as their own personal Saviour.

As an encouragement to this end, I present some methods for parents which have been tried, and have borne good fruit.

It is only when we feel a keen sense of the difficulties and of our own weakness and have a firm faith in divine help, earnestly sought, that we may hope to "train up a child in the way he should go," and claim the precious promise: "When he is old he will not depart from it." We must not only instruct a child how it should go but train it to go that way. Teach it by "precept upon precept, line upon line," and by that more forcible power, a truly consistent, godly example, to reverence God, and to observe the moral code. Yet the child may

learn this and still have its spiritual nature undeveloped, dwarfed, unable to grasp that wonderful power which is able to create a new heart and give a new life of submission to the Holy Spirit. It should not only learn to look upon Christ as the loving, forgiving Saviour of the world but also to look within and realize its own weakness and great need and then to trust Christ fully as its own Saviour.

✓ The time set apart for asking the blessing at the table and for family prayer may be made especially helpful. An elder, though having a high sense of the dignity which should attend the outward observance of religion, said: "I never want my children to remember a period when they did not ask a blessing at the table." And both this elder and a minister, we sometimes visit, frequently request their children to ask a blessing at the table, which, although done in child language and accent, is ever treated by the parents with the gravity and reverence due such a service.

Several years ago the writer was a guest at the home of this minister, a city pastor, who though greatly taxed by the many claims of his position, realizes that his first duty is to his own children. His methods of interesting them in the daily family

gathering for prayer could well serve as an example for many others. He had two little boys who were old enough to be interested, the older having passed his fourth birthday, and both having learned to lisp some of the words of Christ and some songs of praise to Him. One morning, instead of reading the Scriptures, each member of the family, including the domestic helper and the two little boys, recited a passage of Scripture. Another morning they were asked what they would like to have father read about. The younger boy said, "About Samuel." Then came the question, "Shall I read about him when he was a little boy or when he was a big man?" The older boy replied: "When he was a big man." After the reading the father made some comment upon the Bible as being a big letter from God, teaching us to be obedient to Him as was Samuel. Another morning the boys were asked what they would like to sing and with a little help soon made choice of a hymn in the singing of which they engaged heartily. Always the greater part of the prayer was expressed in such simple language, that the little ones could understand and appreciate this part of the service as not being "dry," and they listened attentively and reverently, though



not with the relaxation of muscles which would ensure perfect quiet of little hands and feet.

✦ Later, when this four-year-old boy became eleven, he went to the room of a guest in his home, and invited her to come to prayers. He told her that his parents had been unexpectedly called away on an early train, and said: "We always have family prayers when they are gone for we need it all the more when they are not here to tell us how to do." It was a rainy morning. He said in his prayer: "Even though we do not have sunshine from the sky, may we have sunshine in our hearts." The two younger brothers took part in the service and all was done in the spirit of faith and reverence. A year later these boys were visiting a friend. The oldest one took a brotherly oversight over the other two. At the table he said to the brother next to him in age, "Brother, I think mother would not like you to eat another buckwheat cake." Although the brother was just going to take one, and with a keen appetite, his religious principles prevailed, he ate bread instead, and without a murmur.

✦ When all the members of the family are interested in a daily service of family worship and the mother's earnest, pleading and praising voice is

also frequently heard to ascend from this holy scene, where the father properly takes the lead, then may we look for a united, happy family in which the very atmosphere serves in the favorable development of the spiritual nature of the child. If every child could grow up in such a home then would the "coming Church" soon be here and be a glorious Church indeed. Such helps as these with the constant example of an earnest Christian life, would serve as do the morning sunlight and gentle dews to a growing plant, in invigorating the better nature of the child.

## TRAINING BY PUNISHMENT.

How important that we lead our children while very young to abide under the guiding influence of the blessed Saviour and so avert very largely the punishments which would otherwise be necessary!

In the careful training of our children we find qualities, not pleasing to God, will appear, or some which are not bad will develop too much to make the character well-rounded, and so the parent will need to restrain the appetite or the temper or to bend the will, with care not to break it, but so as to give force in the right direction. Sometimes to this end punishment must be resorted to in order sufficiently to impress the child with the disapproval of the parent and of God.

In confirmation of this view I am glad to quote the following from the able and scholarly address of Rev. Dr. C. H. Richards before the National Council of Congregational Churches at Portland, 1901, now published and entitled, "Spiritual Nurture of Children." He says: "A lawless, reckless boy, refusing the restraints of the home, will naturally become a lawless, reckless man, hating all restraint of God or man, and will be a dangerous

citizen. A firm, wise, loving control, which will tame and train the wayward life into self-mastery, is one of the greatest blessings childhood can have."

Dear parent, I speak earnestly to you, not of mere untried theories, but as a mother having had my heart stirred by the needs of my own seven little ones and as having thought, felt and experienced much during all the years that the five who live were growing up as Christians and into their present places of usefulness for Christ. And now, while we recognize the proverb that "the rod" of correction should not be spared, experience and a due appreciation of the worth and dignity of a little child make it evident that "the rod" need not be a stick to be efficient as a correcting influence.

The former school teacher and distinguished poet, Charles M. Dickinson, Consul-General to Turkey, and who aided in the liberation of Miss Ellen M. Stone, in a poem of rare beauty and tenderness, "The Children," says:

"They are idols of hearts and of households,  
They are angels of God in disguise;  
His sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,  
His glory still gleams in their eyes;  
O, these truants from home and from heaven,  
They have made me more manly and mild!  
And I know now how Jesus could liken  
The kingdom of God to a child.

“The twig is so easily bended,  
I have banished the rule and the rod,  
I have taught them the goodness of knowledge,  
They have taught me the goodness of God;  
My heart is a dungeon of darkness,  
Where I shut them from breaking a rule;  
My frown is sufficient correction;  
My love is the law of the school.”

In the beautiful tribute which the Rev. Frank Dewitt Talmage paid his distinguished father, he said: “There never was in America a happier or more prayerful home than that of which he was the head. My father never lifted a hand to strike a blow, yet he ruled his children with a rod stronger than one made out of iron. It was the rod of love. . . . Family prayers were not to us a meaningless formality. We felt that our dear father was taking us to the throne of grace, as Joseph the Good, brought his brethren into the throne room of the Egyptian king.”

Rev. Jacob Abbott, D. D., the distinguished author of over two hundred books, in his excellent work “Gentle Measures in the Management of Young Children,” is opposed to the corporal punishment of children and shows better methods for securing obedience. Speaking of “bodily punishment,” he says: “The child may be whipped or tied to the bedpost and kept in a constrained and un-

comfortable position for a long time, . . . or punished by the infliction of other bodily suffering. There is no doubt that there is a tendency in such treatment to correct or cure the fault. But measures like these, whether successful or not, are certainly violent measures. They shock the whole nervous system, sometimes with the excitement of terror, and pain always, and probably with that of resentment and anger. In some cases this excitement is extreme. The excessively delicate organization of the brain through which such agitations reach the sensorium, and which in children of an early age, is in its most tender and sensitive state of development, is subject to a most intense and violent agitation. The evil effects of this excessive cerebral action may, *perhaps*, pass entirely away in a few hours, and leave no trace of injury behind; but then, on the other hand, there is certain reason to fear that such commotions, especially if often repeated, tend to impede the regular and healthful development of the organs, and that they may become the origin of derangements, or of actual disorganizations, resulting very seriously in future years."

Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher speaks of her husband as gradually brought from the old time and

severe methods to the gentler discipline of training children with the omission of the rod in its literal meaning.

Robert J. Burdette, in his excellent article on "The Father and His Boy," published in the Ladies' Home Journal, April, 1894, says: "Of course there must be punishment for offences. . . yet I do not believe in the rod. . . . We are a busy people and whipping takes up less of our valuable time than any other mode of punishment. To reason with the boy, to talk it over with him, lovingly and calmly, might take an hour, maybe two hours. But you can whip him in three minutes. . . . A man fighting, say of one hundred and fifty-two pounds, ought to be able to knock a nine-year-old boy out in the first round. You go to your work nervous, half ashamed. . . . The boy goes his way, with contempt writhing in his heart, born of the pain and ache. It is the punishment of the savage. It wasn't a hot word of scathing and contemptuous rebuke that broke bad Peter's heart, that melted it into a fountain of burning tears; it was a loving, compassionate, pitying look. . . . Don't be too dignified with your boy. The more he loves you and the less he fears you, the more profoundly will he respect you."

Never allow children to be frightened into obe-

dience from fear of imaginary harm, such as from "The Bad Man," or some "hobgoblin." Domestic servants should be carefully instructed not to resort to such methods. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged."—Col. 3:21.

Observation shows that children whose restraints were enforced by corporal punishment, are, when that restraining power is withdrawn, more likely to fall into temptation than those whose training has been of a different nature, impressing the heart with a fear of displeasing the parent and God, more fully than its mind with the fear of physical pain.

Punishment should never be resorted to unless the child refuses to heed a calm and loving reproof and sometimes the physical condition is such as to forbid good results from either reproof or punishment. Especially may this be so if the young child is weary or sleepy or unwell. In such a case it is better, if possible, to pass by any misdeed entirely or with only, "My little dear, I am so sorry, I will tell you more tomorrow about how sorry I am."

Often the child may be diverted from its determination to do a thing by telling it that it may have its choice between that and some one or two other things which the parent knows it would desire. I



have found great aid in using tickets, giving a little Scripture card each day that the child was good, and a white ticket with a black mark upon it for each day that the child failed. At certain intervals the good tickets were returned, and a gift which was of some value given instead, with the understanding that it was not to pay for being good but only to be a reminder. A black mark reminder, however, will not always prove sufficient, and there are times when punishment must be inflicted. In endeavoring to control children without the use of corporal punishment, dear parent, let me urge you not to resort to scolding or threatening, it can only injure the fine sensibilities of the child. Speak low. Impatient, harsh or angry tones never did the heart of any child good. Keep your own voice and words under complete control, ever bearing tones of love and gentleness. Never let the punishment be such as will distract and lead the child from reflection upon its own mental and spiritual weakness to the consideration of physical pain, and how it may, in obedience to the instinct of self-preservation, avoid such punishment when again falling into disobedience.

Let the management be firm and steadily faithful but never harsh and severe.

No doubt that many a child learns to practice deception, to lie and steal, and hate proper restraint from the severity and sometimes injustice of the punishment received. There is no case of a child having ordinary mental power, living under religious influences, which cannot be managed more effectually by methods other than corporal punishment. It is true the child may be led by instruction and physical punishment to look within and see that its wilfulness has displeased the parent and to avoid pain, be led to greater care not to repeat the offence, but even yet its spiritual nature may remain in a state of lethargy which leaves the child an easy victim for the first real temptation. The time soon comes when a child cannot be continually shielded by the parent or restrained from sin by the dread of punishment, so it needs to be more carefully trained to realize its own weakness and to look beyond the parent, to God as an ever-present Being who approves or disapproves of all that is thought or felt or done and from whom nothing can be hid by any device.

As a punishment, deny the child some coveted pleasure or confine it in a corner or in a large, airy, comfortable closet where it will not be afraid or in a room or to the bed, or in some way deny it liberty

and diversion of thought until it has reflected upon the cause of this loss of liberty and become humbled. Then approach it quietly and lovingly with such questioning as, "My dear little one, mother is so sorry that you have done wrong and Jesus, the loving Saviour, does not want you to do wrong and it makes you very unhappy." As the little one is thus led more and more to look in upon its own heart it feels deeply convinced that it has sinned, and is now prepared for such a question as: "You don't want to displease mother and God and make your heart worse by doing naughty things, do you, and are you not sorry?" A child thus led will invariably learn to answer from the depths of its heart and with much emotion, "Yes, mother, I am sorry and I don't want to be bad." Now, train the child to feel more and more its own weakness by repeating such words as, "I know you don't want to be bad, but Satan wants us all to do wrong things and we are so weak, even if we do try we will fail unless Jesus helps us all the time, and he loves us so very much that He wants to help us if we will ask Him and try ourselves to obey His teachings. No one, not even father and mother, can be really good unless always helped by Jesus." Now, all this is true and the child feels its own weakness and through

it a longing desire to be helped to do what is right. Let the parent now ask in an earnest, feeling tone, with her own heart deeply impressed with the need of divine help: "Don't you want to ask Jesus to forgive you and to help you to be good all the time?" Dear parent, don't say you *must* ask for forgiveness but rather don't you *want* to ask for forgiveness and thus cultivate a real *desire* for prayer. The reply is sure to come and with emotion, "Yes, mother." Sometimes such a prayer as the child has learned, as "Now I lay me down to sleep," does not seem to it to meet the case and it will hesitate, though the mother will have added, "Well, ask Him right now, here." As she sees the hesitation, let her ask, "Would you like to have mother help you?" From a yearning heart the reply will come, "Yes, mother." "Then you say the words right over after me." As the two kneel together, with the little head close to the parent in that sacred place, where the Lord may surely be found, the Holy Spirit will descend as a dove of peace and both the parent and the child will go forth stronger and better able to meet coming trials.

Thus the deeper nature of the child is developed with the rest of its being, and strength is gained by which it may ever lay hold of that Power which is

able to lead it onward and upward. The earnest, heartfelt prayer of that child is just as surely heard and answered as that of the learned divine, and the Holy Spirit will be given to it to lead it safely, even though from its lack of experience and the weakness of human nature it may continue to come short of the highest ideal of a Christian life.

A spirit of prayer may also be cultivated by teaching the child regularly to add to its committed prayer, petitions from its own heart and in its own language. While it is essential for the young to learn to pray it is not well to force a child to say its prayers contrary to its will. The Lord will not recognize or answer such a prayer. It would be but mockery and not prayer and must injure rather than help the fine sensibilities of the child.

The writer knew well a baby boy who had much will power and who was keenly sensitive to conditions about him, and so would become excited beyond control.

In the anxious study of his case which was attended with much earnest prayer and great consciousness of parental weakness, the young mother was led to feel very deeply that only very gentle methods should be used. So for months if anything occurred which was exciting him she would

at once leave what she was attending to, whether it be a caller in the parlor, or some piece of household work which might perhaps be spoiled by leaving it, and take him in her lap, press him close to her in a loving embrace, then talk to him in low, gentle tones of anything, till the excitement passed. It was not long till this method always served as a charm, stilling the storm of excitement and soothing his nervous system. Then step by step the little fellow learned that it was sinful to yield to such a lack of self-control and to pray most earnestly for forgiveness and divine help. His prayers were surely answered.

The self-control he acquired even while so young as in his third, fourth and fifth years made it evident that he had special divine help and all the years he was growing up his daily life gave marked evidence that he walked with Jesus and was helped by His wonderful power.

His training was not such as to break the will which has been of great service to him, giving him great energy and enabling him to overcome obstacles and to practice a remarkable degree of self-control. From his infancy he has had a real love for prayer and a firm faith in God which gives him

greater usefulness in the work for humanity in which he is engaged.

These principles apply well to all, as I have seen by a large experience, in day school and also in schools for neglected boys and girls. Some cases have come under my observation in which pupils who could not be tolerated in school under the old methods of not sparing the rod, became obedient and lovable under the milder measures of another school.

One was a lad, nearly grown, who had never been retained long in any school because under the usual methods he was unmanageable.

The new teacher felt great sympathy for him and gave him special help with his lessons and when he was provoked and very provoking she did not chide him.

His heart melted and he became one of the most dutiful pupils in the school. He heroically laid aside his bad habits and his teacher remembers him as one whose life has been brightened by gentle measures.

Another case was that of a school of boys with a man teacher who scarcely allowed half a day to pass without whipping some boy. A new teacher took the same school. He did not approve of the

corporal punishment and never made use of it and had far better control than the former teacher and the pupils made much more rapid and more thorough progress in their studies.

The writer reluctantly refers to her own family to illustrate the hints given, but is constrained to do so in the hope of giving encouragement to others, especially to friends who may read these pages.

A little son, when about five years old, treated a playmate rudely. His father took him upon his lap and in gentle tones explained to him that it was very naughty. I noticed that he came up stairs to the large, comfortable closet, where he more than once had found time for reflection and supposed that his father had sent him there as a punishment. Later in the day, however, I learned that the child had not been sent, but feeling so keenly his misdeed, had gone himself and remained a long time in meditation and prayer for help. And the Lord has helped him to maintain a most courteous, consistent Christian character from his infancy to adult age without, in a single instance, being punished by physical pain at home or at school.

I sympathize deeply with Christian parents who have from circumstances beyond their foresight or control, been so hindered in the training of their



children as to fail in the development of strong, Christian characters, and I rejoice with those who have been able to train up their children in the way they should go and reap the blessed assurance that they are so well established in the good way that when they are old they will not depart from it.

Let us ever maintain a consciousness that while the mysteries of God's plans are beyond the comprehension of learned divines, His plan of salvation is so simple that it is adapted to every age and to every nation and to every period of human life, capable of receiving instruction and of learning to love Jesus.

Devon, Pennsylvania.





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